

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 1-54 are pending in the application, with 1, 8, 13, 18, 22, 36, 39, and 42 being the independent claims. Claims 28-30 were previously withdrawn. Claim 18 is sought to be amended. This change is believed to introduce no new matter, and its entry is respectfully requested.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Examiner Interview

Applicants would like to thank Examiner Soward for the courteous Examiner Interview conducted at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on November 6, 2003, with Applicants' representative Jeffrey S. Weaver, Reg. No. 45,608. During the Examiner Interview, Examiner Soward and Applicants' representative agreed that the claims are patentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,020,637 to Karnezos (hereinafter Karnezos).

Claim Objection

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On page 2 of the Office Action, claim 18 was objected to because of the following informalities: "to should have been between "relative" and "a" in the last line of the claim." Applicants have amended claim 18 to correct this informality.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that this objection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-8, 13, 16, 17, 31, 32, and 45-48 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Karnezos. As stated above, during the Examiner Interview conducted November 6, 2003, Examiner Soward and Applicants' representative agreed that the claims are patentable over Karnezos. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of these claims be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Karnezos and Yazawa

Claims 9-12, 14, 15, 18-27, 33-36, 39, 42, and 49-54 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Karnezos as applied to claims 1-8, 13, 16, 17, 31, 32, and 45-48 above, and further in view of U.S. Publication No. 2002/0072214 A1 to Yazawa *et al.* (hereinafter Yazawa). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection, and request that it be withdrawn.

As described above, claims 1-8, 13, 16, 17, 31, 32, and 45-58 are patentable over Karnezos. Furthermore, Applicants assert that Yazawa does not supply the missing teachings. Thus, claims 9-12, 14, 15, 18-27, 33-36, 39, 42, and 49-54 are patentable over Karnezos and Yazawa, alone or in combination, for at least these reasons, and further in

view of their own features. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of these claims be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Karnezos, Yazawa, and Chang

Claims 37, 38, 40, 41, 43, and 44 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Karnezos and Yazawa as applied to claims 1-36, 40, 41, 43, and 44 above, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,366,589 to Chang (hereinafter Chang). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection, and request that it be withdrawn.

As described above, claims 1-36, 40, 41, 43, and 44 are patentable over Karnezos and Yazawa, alone or in combination. Furthermore, Applicants assert that Chang does not supply the missing teachings. Thus, claims 37, 38, 40, 41, 43, and 43 are patentable over Karnezos, Yazawa, and Chang, alone or in combination, for at least these reasons, and further in view of their own features. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of these claims be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Other Matters

Applicants note that Information Disclosure Statements were filed in the present application on August 29, 2002, June 26, 2003, July 2, 2003, and concurrently with the present Amendment and Reply. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider the documents submitted with these four Information Disclosure Statements, and provide an indication of her consideration by forwarding to Applicants initialed copies of the respective Forms 1449.

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Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: 11-14-03

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